

THE FANTASTICKS

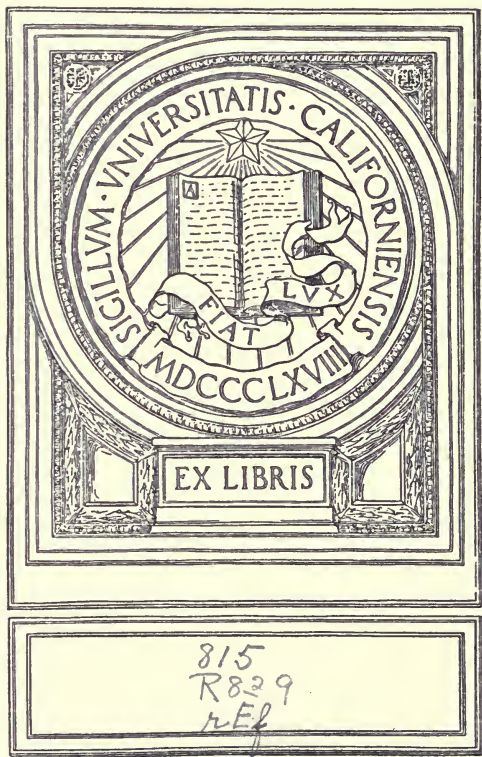
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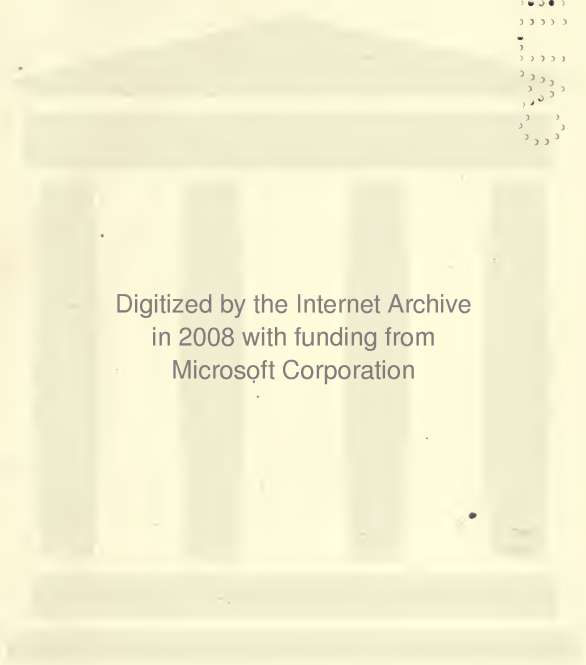


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EDMOND ROSTAND

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The Fantasticks

A ROMANTIC COMEDY *in Three*
Acts by EDMOND ROSTAND

Freely Done into *English*
Verse by GEORGE FLEMING



New York R. H. RUSSELL 1900

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Uniform with this Volume

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

A Play in Five Acts

Price \$1.00

ALBION

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ROBERT HOWARD RUSSELL

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

PERCINET	.	.	.	.	A Lover
STRAFOREL	.	.	.	.	A Bravo
BERGAMIN	.	.	.	.	Father to Percinet
PASQUIN	.	.	.	.	Father to Sylvette
BLAISE	.	.	.	.	A Gardener
SYLVETTE	.	.	.	.	{ Daughter of Pasquin in love with Percinet

BRAVOS, MUSICIANS, NEGROES, TORCH-BEARERS, A NOTARY,
WITNESSES, WEDDING-GUESTS, etc.

*The Scene to take place where one pleases, provided the
Costumes are pretty enough*

THIS VERSION OF

“LES ROMANTIQUES”

WAS FIRST PRODUCED AT THE ROYALTY THEATRE

MAY 29, 1900

[illegible]

ACT I

The stage is divided by an old mossy wall covered with climbing plants and vines. To the right a bit of BERGAMIN'S park; to the left the park belonging to PASQUIN. Benches against the wall on either side.

The curtain rising discloses PERCINET seated on the top of the wall, with a book on his knee. He is reading aloud to SYLVETTE, who listens attentively from the other side of the wall, against which she leans, standing on the bench L.

SYLVETTE

[*clasping her hands in admiration, and looking at*
PERCINET].

How beautiful ! how beautiful ! dear Percinet,—
[she checks herself, looks down, and adds shyly]
 —dear friend.

PERCINET

[with enthusiasm, but absorbed in his book].

Wait till you hear the lovely, perfect end !
Now, Romeo : [*He reads.*] ‘Look, love, what
 envious streaks

‘Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east ;
 ‘Night’s candles are burnt out, and jocund day
 ‘Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain-top’ :

[*With expression.*]

‘I must be gone and live ; or stay and——’

SYLVETTE

[*who has been listening to some imaginary sound,
 interrupts him sharply*].

Stop !

Listen ! [*She looks about in alarm.*]

PERCINET

[*after listening*].

No !—nothing to be seen or heard.

[*Half tender, half bantering*].

Sylvia ! your heart is like a little bird
 That flutters from her nest if leaves but stir.
 Cease trembling, Faintheart ! [*Takes up book.*]

Listen now to Her—

That Juliet, whose love could never die.

[*He reads.*]

‘Yon light is not daylight, I know it, I ;
 ‘It is some meteor that the sun exhales
 ‘To be to thee this night a torch-bearer.’ . . .
 Then He :—‘Yon grey is not the morning’s eye,
 ‘’Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia’s brow ;
 ‘Nor that is not the lark whose notes do beat

‘The vaulty heaven so high above our heads :

‘I have more care to stay than will to go.’

[*He looks up and speaks with emotion.*]

‘Come, death, and welcome ! Juliet wills it so !’

SYLVETTE

[*childishly*].

No, no !—not *that*. Oh ! do not let him die !

If you go on, I’ll—weep.

PERCINET

[*turning to her with a sudden smile*].

I would not have you cry.

And, since my lady’s pleasure sits that way,

[*He looks at his book, and shuts it.*]

Let noble Romeo live another day.

[*He looks about him.*]

How the leaves rustle ! How those great boughs
seem

Bending and brooding over Shakespeare’s dream !

SYLVETTE.

Yes ; they are beautiful, enchanted speeches :

I love them too. And all these waving beeches
Sway to their rhythm in a mood divine.

O yes, I, too, have found your Shakespeare fine.

Only, [*naïvely*] his verse is finer, Percinet,

When *you* recite it. For—you have a way——

THE FANTASTICKS

PERCINET

[delighted, but protesting].

Flatterer !

SYLVETTE

[nodding her head gravely].

A certain way of saying certain things—

[She sighs.]

But those poor lovers——

[Mournfully.]

Ah, what sufferings !

[She sighs.]

They make me think——

PERCINET

[quickly].

Of whom ?

SYLVETTE

[blushing, embarrassed].

Oh !—no one whom one knows.

PERCINET

[half teasing].

And is that why your face becomes a rose ?

SYLVETTE

[putting her hands to her cheeks].

No one !

PERCINET.

Ah, Sylvia!

[*Threatening her with his finger.*]

Those transparent eyes
Can hide no secrets—save of Paradise.

[*Mysteriously.*]

Our own two fathers you remembered then.

SYLVETTE.

Perhaps I did.

PERCINET.

Two angry, worthy men,
Whom long hate sunders——

SYLVETTE.

And hate *can* divide.
When I've remembered that [*sadly*] I've—very
often—cried.
For when I first grew up—a whole long month ago—
And left my convent's shade to see the great
world's show,

[*she waves her hands towards the trees, etc.*]

My father brought me here, beside these mossy
stones,
And showed me, over there, the park *your* father
owns.
'Look, child,' he said, 'yon fair wood is the den
Where lurks my mortal foe, the worst of living
men——

A certain Master Bergamin, whose son
Must *never* cross thy path.—I bid thee shun
All sight, all contact with that loathèd name.
Thy hate and mine must show an equal flame,
Or I renounce thee. Promise!—or be cursed!’

[*Solemnly.*]

I promised. [*With a change of voice.*] But I had
not seen you first!

PERCINET.

And did I not the same mad oath repeat?
I swore to hate you. And—I love you, Sweet.

SYLVETTE

[*starting back*].

Love me?

PERCINET

[*firmly*].

I love you.

SYLVETTE

[*faltering*].

But—that is a crime.

PERCINET

[*grandiloquently*].

It is. What matter? Every single time
Love is forbid, love seeks some swifter way.

[*Violently.*]

I love you.—Kiss me.

SYLVETTE.

Fie, fie, Percinet !

[She jumps down from the bench and runs away.]

PERCINET

[with reproachful surprise].

And yet—you love me.

SYLVETTE

[scandalised].

Oh !

PERCINET.

But, dearest child,
I put your thought in words. We were beguiled
If we still doubted. What I speak, you've said.
You said it, Sylvia. *You* compared the dead
Immortal lovers of Verona——

SYLVETTE

[putting her hands to her ears].

No !

PERCINET.

—To us, my Juliet !—*I* am Romeo.

SYLVETTE.

I never did compare——

PERCINET.

Our battling fathers, Sweet,
Remember them. And see me at thy feet,
O fairer Juliet!—Brother Montagu,

[stretching out his arms]

You had the old love ; have I not the new ?

[With emphasis, turning to SYLVETTE.]

Well as they loved, I'll love you better yet,
Right in the teeth of Father Capulet.

SYLVETTE

[drawing a little nearer the wall].

But *are* we lovers ? Can love be so swift ?

PERCINET

Love never bargains o'er his royal gift.
I watched you pass my door——

SYLVETTE

[naïvely].

And I saw too.

PERCINET

Our eyes had spoken ere your name I knew.

SYLVETTE

One day I looked for nuts beside this wall ;
It was by chance——

PERCINET.

By chance—no plan at all—
I brought my book, and——

SYLVETTE.

Off my ribbon blew.

PERCINET.

What man controls his fate? I guessed 'twas
You.
I climbed this bench to seize the precious knot——

SYLVETTE

[getting up on the bench].

I climbed this bench——

PERCINET.

And by this blessed spot
I wait each day, with beating heart, to hear
The music of your bird-laugh drawing near.
Your laugh—your signal. Then your dear hair
shines,
And your dear face uprises through the vines.

SYLVETTE.

Since we are lovers, we should plight our troth.

PERCINET.

I've thought of that.

SYLVETTE.

I, Sylvette, nothing loath—
Last of the Pasquinots—to you, the last
Of all the Bergamins——

[She holds out her hand, which he kisses.]

PERCINET.

I'll hold my treasure fast!

SYLVETTE.

People will talk of Us in years and years to be.

PERCINET.

Two tender blossoms of too harsh a tree!

SYLVETTE.

And yet, who knows, dear friend? The hour may
ring
When Heaven, through us, may soothe their
bickering.

PERCINET.

I doubt it!

SYLVETTE.

But I *feel* that Fate befriends.
Besides,—I've thought of half a dozen ends
All possible, and——

PERCINET.

What?

SYLVETTE.

But, dearest, only look !
Suppose—I've read of such things in a book—
Suppose a prince—that prince who never fails !—
Should ride this way, as in the fairy tales ?
—I fly to tell him of our hopeless love :
He listens : I beseech. All other men above,
A prince gives orders ; and our fathers' pride
Bends to his will——

PERCINET.

They give me You for bride—.

SYLVETTE.

Or,—as in dear old Beauty and the Beast,—
You seem to sicken,—you grow pale, at least—.

PERCINET.

My trembling father bids me name my care,——

SYLVETTE.

You say, 'I die, since Sylvia is so fair !'

PERCINET.

His heart *must* soften !

SYLVETTE.

Or—another plan :—
Some rich old Duke, some old and wicked man,
Who sees my portrait, sends to me a page
All golden armour, to demand some gage
That I become his Duchess.

PERCINET.

[*interrupting*].

But you answer 'No !'

SYLVETTE.

Then, on a night, as is my wont, I go
Deep in the park's dim shade, to dream of Thee.
His minions seize me ; then I shriek——

PERCINET.

For Me !

I fly—my dagger in my vengeful hand—
And, like a lion, leap upon their band——

SYLVETTE.

Three—four men sink before your flashing blade ;—
Enters my father ; hails you ; unafraid
You tell your noble name ; he bursts in tears of
joy ;
And, when he yields his Girl, your father gives
his Boy.

PERCINET.

And ever after that, we live in perfect bliss.

SYLVETTE

[*seriously*].

Dearest, there's nothing surely very strange in
this ?

PERCINET

[*hearing a noise*].

Somebody coming !

SYLVETTE

[*losing her head*].

Kiss me !

PERCINET.

Till to-night.

You will return at dusk ?

SYLVETTE.

No.

PERCINET.

Yes,—my Heart's Delight !

SYLVETTE

[*disappearing behind the wall*].

Your father !

[*PERCINET leaps nimbly down from the wall.*]

BERGAMIN.

[*SYLVETTE is invisible where he stands.*]

What ! I find you mooning here ?
Always in this same spot ?

PERCINET.

But this spot is so dear !
I love this spot. I love this mossy seat :
See how the wild vines clasp its faithful feet !
See how, in arabesques, their tendrils fall !—
The air tastes sweeter here.

BERGAMIN.

Here ? By this stifling wall ?

PERCINET

[*with enthusiasm*].

I love that wall !

BERGAMIN.

I'm sure I can't see why.

SYLVETTE

[*aside*].

He cannot see.

PERCINET

[*with a touch of fatuity*].

But, sir, you won't deny

Its beauty ? See that happy crown of grass ;—
The redd'ning vines mix with the ivy's green ;—
With pale wisteria ; and the paler mass
Of honeyed woodbine and of eglantine.
My fine old wall ! that from its gaping sides
Flings to the sun a strange and ruddy fleece
All starred with gentle flowers ; whose deep moss
hides

This bench, whereon a king might rest at ease.

BERGAMIN.

Tut ! tut ! young man.—That cock won't fight at
all.—

You'd have me think you make eyes at *a wall* ?

PERCINET

[*same manner*].

But, father ! when a wall has flower-eyes !

[*He turns to the wall and addresses SYLVETTE out of sight.*]

Eyes like blue stars !—Eyes of the right June-blue.
Smiles of pure azure.—Looks of blue surprise.

—As if some flower should learn the way to woo.
[*With emotion.*] By Heaven ! if e'er I should forget
their power——

BERGAMIN

[*shouting*].

Walls —have—no—eyes !

PERCINET.

What do you call—this flower ?

[*Smiling and foppish, he offers BERGAMIN a flower he deftly picks from the wall.*]

SYLVETTE

[*aside*].

Sweet heaven ! how clever !

BERGAMIN

[*with a grunt, after staring at him and his flower*].

Son, you are—an Ass.
But well I know what's brought you to this pass.
[*Signs of alarm from PERCINET and SYLVETTE.*]

You hide away—to read.

[*He snatches the book from PERCINET'S pocket,
and looks at it.*]

Plays !

[*He opens book and lets it fall with horror.*]

O Lord !—*Poetry.*

Written in verse,—in verse. Dear Lord ! can
such things be ?

[*Pointing each word with his stick on the ground.*]

You moon—you hide—ignore your neighbour's
needs ;

You talk of eyes, and walls, pick foolish weeds ;—
Eyes in my wall !—Good God ! [*Mimicking*
PERCINET.] Eyes ! mosses ! flowers ! Fate !
[*Shouting.*] Walls—have—no—eyes, my lad.
They need to be built—straight.

[*Pointing to wall with stick.*]

Who knows what threat'ning breach may lurk
behind that screen ?

I'll send my men, anon, to strip yon silly
green.

To keep a hated neighbour well at bay,
I'll have that whole side whitewashed. All the
way

I'll set it thick with sharp and broken glass,
Fragments of bottles, till no fly may pass
My rankèd legions——

PERCINET.

Father, spare my vines—!

BERGAMIN.

Not one. All glass. All razor-cutting lines.

PERCINET and SYLVETTE

[overcome with horror].

Oh!

BERGAMIN.

But to business. *[He sits on the bench R.]*

Hm-m? *[He gets up, looks at wall suspiciously.]*

Though walls can't see,

They've ears can hear.

[He appears to be about to climb the bench. Alarm of

PERCINET. SYLVETTE, on hearing the noise, makes herself as small as possible and crouches under the wall. But BERGAMIN, making a face which shows he is suffering from some old stiffness, beckons to his son to climb in his stead and look over. To PERCINET.]

You climb, and look for me.

[PERCINET scrambles quickly on the bench, leans over the wall and speaks to SYLVETTE, who has immediately risen.]

PERCINET

[to SYLVETTE].

To-night?—To-night?

B

SYLVETTE

[giving him her hand, which he kisses ; in a low voice].

I'll come, As soon as darkness nears.

PERCINET

[same voice].

I shall be here.

SYLVETTE

[same voice].

I love you.

BERGAMIN.

Well ?

PERCINET

[jumping down lightly ; aloud].

No sign of—ears !

BERGAMIN

[reassured, sits down again].

Then business, son. I've chosen you a wife.

SYLVETTE.

Ah !

BERGAMIN.

What was that ?

PERCINET.

That ? Nothing.

BERGAMIN.

I swear I heard a cry.
'Pon my life,

PERCINET

[looking up into the trees].

Some little wounded bird—.

SYLVETTE.

Alas !

PERCINET.

I almost think the branch above there stirred—.

BERGAMIN.

Well then, my only son, with due reflection
I've made your choice—
ripe

PERCINET

[moves away up stage, whistling impertinently].

Whew ! Whew !

BERGAMIN

*[after an instant of suffocating indignation
follows him].*

Whistle ! you silly snipe !
I am not to be moved.

PERCINET

[with impertinence, coming down stage].

Whew-ew !

BERGAMIN.

You—piping merle !

I say, I've made your choice. I've found your wife. A pearl.

PERCINET.

And—if I don't like pearls?

BERGAMIN

[*stupefied*].

Not—*like*? God bless my soul,
[*he raises his cane*] I'll teach you what you like——

[PERCINET *wards off the stick with his hand.*]

BERGAMIN.

You scamp! you——

PERCINET

[*calmly, sentimentally*].

Sir, the whole
Green coppice is alive with spring-awakened
 song ;
And where young leaves are thick, young birds
 woo all day long
By little woodland streams——

BERGAMIN.

Indecent !

PERCINET

[*same business, with stick*].

It is May.

The world is full of laughter. Flies, at play——

BERGAMIN.

Profligate !

PERCINET—

[*same business*].

—swarm, in sunny fields, to kiss
The thousand flowers, whose opening makes
their bliss.

For Love——.

BERGAMIN.

You — bandit !

PERCINET.

—sets all hearts a-quake.

—And you would have *me* wed for reason's sake ?

BERGAMIN

[*with rage*].

You shall, you scoundrel !

PERCINET

[*very sweetly*].

My—de-ar—father,—no.

Dear wall! [*turning towards SYLVETTE*] bear
witness that it is not so.

For when I wed, I'll wed such high romance
As never yet was seen on sea or land—.

[*To BERGAMIN.*]

Before I yield, I'll lead you such a dance——

[*Runs off stage. Exit.*]

BERGAMIN.

Wait till I catch you!

[*Runs after PERCINET, brandishing stick. Exit.*]

SYLVETTE

[*looking after BERGAMIN*].

Oh! I understand

Almost—my papa's hate for this old——

PASQUIN

[*entering L.*].

Well?

And what is Missy doing?

SYLVETTE

[*quickly*].

I'll not tell!

[*Confused.*]

—Nothing!—I mean—I'm walking—.

PASQUIN.

Tut! tut! careless maid,
How came you all alone? And *here*?

SYLVETTE

[*hurriedly*].

I'm not afraid.

PASQUIN.

Alone? Beside this wall? But I forbade you,
child,
Ever to see this wall.—What! will you drive
me wild?
Have you forgot this park, this haunt, this horrid
den
Where lurks my oldest foe—the worst of living
men?

SYLVETTE

[*rather bored*].

I know, papa.

PASQUIN.

And yet you linger by this wall.—
You dare their evil looks.—You take no pains
at all!—
What if this ruffian's son — fit son of ruffian
sire,—
Should find *my* daughter here, frail victim to
his ire?

The bare thought makes me creep.—Quick,
quick ! with iron nails
Let me beset this wall ;—with sharp and cutting
flails ;—
I'll turn it to a knife ; a porcupine ; a spear ;
I'll make my iron bite each mortal thing that's
near ;
I'll bristle like a boar——

SYLVETTE

[*aside*].

Papa's no spendthrift. Until he counts the cost!

PASQUIN.

Go!—[*Tenderly*] Mind that you don't get lost.

[Exit SYLVETTE. He watches her out of sight
with affected anger.]

[Enter BERGAMIN, speaking off stage.]

BERGAMIN.

This note, post haste, to Master Straforel.

PASQUIN

[*running to the wall and climbing the bench L.*].
Bergamin !

BERGAMIN

[same business, bench R.].

Pasquin !

[*They embrace.*]

PASQUIN

[*affectionately*].

Do I see you well ?

BERGAMIN.

So, so, old friend.

PASQUIN-

[*solicitous*].

That gout ?

BERGAMIN

[*shrugs shoulders*].

Ugh ! But *you* had a cough ?

PASQUIN.

I have one. [*Coughs.*]

BERGAMIN

[*rubbing his hands*].

Well, 'tis done. That marriage will
come off !

PASQUIN.

What ?

BERGAMIN.

Oh, I heard it all. I hid there [*pointing*]
by those trees.

They 're mad—quite mad—with love.

PASQUIN.

Hurray !

BERGAMIN

[same business, rubbing hands].

Mad as you please.

To business now—ha ! ha !—and that right
speedily.

—Two fathers, and two cheery widowers, we ;
I had one son, of a romantic name——

PASQUIN.

Fantastic !

BERGAMIN

[with a shrug].

His poor mother pined for fame—.

You had one daughter — sky-blue — with a
Soul.

—What was our hope ? What was our daily
goal ?

PASQUIN.

To overthrow this wall.

BERGAMIN.

To live here, side by side.

PASQUIN.

To join the two estates——

BERGÁMIN.

Like old friends, true and tried——

PASQUIN.

Like prudent landlords, too——

BERGAMIN.

For that, what did we plan?

PASQUIN.

Our children's marriage ; hey ?

BERGAMIN.

But think, my dear old man :
If they but dreamt of this, if they once guessed
us friends,
Where were our triumph then ? A marriage, for
sane ends,
Is not a very tempting article, I fear,
To fine, fantastic—geese ! So, since they lived
not near,
We hid from them all plans that pointed Hymen's
way,
Till school and college sent them home to stay.
Then, I,—remembering that stolen love
Tastes sweet as stolen fruit,—and that above
All other joys they'd prize a guilty bliss,—
I planned our deadly hatred. [*He chuckles.*] After
this—
And through *my* cunning—we, the warring sires,
Need only condescend to our desires.

PASQUIN

[*with enthusiasm*].

I call that genius. Yes, by heaven I do !

BERGAMIN

[*modestly*].

Genius ? Ah well ! old friend, *I* won't say no !

—But see, who comes— ? Hush now.—Observe
him well.

That man approaching—that is Straforel,—

[*STRAFOREL is seen in the magnificent costume of a Bravo, slowly and majestically advancing down stage.*]

The famous bravo, freelance, cavalier.

—I wrote to him but now—that's why he's here.—

'Tis *he* abducts your girl.

[*BERGAMIN descends hastily from wall, and bows to STRAFOREL.*]

BERGAMIN.

Allow me, first of all,

Sir, to present my friend,——

STRAFOREL

[*bowing*].

Sir— ?

[*He looks about him, puzzled to see no one.*]

BERGAMIN

[*pointing to PASQUIN, a-straddle the wall*].

—Pasquin. On the wall.

STRAFOREL

[*aside*].

Faith ! a new setting for an ancient fool !

BERGAMIN

[*pompous*].

My scheme, sir, would impress——

STRAFOREL

[*sardonic*].

—an infant school !

BERGAMIN

[*taken aback*].

—Man of experience.—Ha ! you act——

STRAFOREL

[*bowing*].

—and hold my peace.

BERGAMIN.

Ha ! an abduction, then ; with fighting, if you
please.

STRAFOREL.

That's understood.

BERGAMIN.

Ah ! but with prudent, careful men,
Who will not hurt my boy, [*pompous*] my Son
and Heir——

STRAFOREL.

Oh,—then,

I'll take the foils myself,—

BERGAMIN.

Your humble servant, sir.

[*They bow.*]

PASQUIN

[*to BERGAMIN.*]

You ask him what it costs.

BERGAMIN

[*embarrassed.*]

Ahem ! I hope I—er—.

For an abduction, now—what is the usual charge ?

STRAFOREL

[*with a swagger.*]

Sir, that depends. The price is small and large :

It goes by merit. If I've understood,
What *you* require is something neat and good.
I, in your place, should order—a first-class.

[*Bowing, with flourish.*]

BERGAMIN

[*dazzled.*]

Is there such choice ?

STRAFOREL.

I'd rather think there was !

Sir ! we've the obvious, open, schoolboy rape,
Which only needs black cloaks, no matter what
their shape ;

The rape by cab ;—'tis little in request ;—
The rape by day—the rape by night looks best ;—
The pompous rape with coaches of the court,
With powdered lacqueys, wigs of every sort—
(The wigs are extra)—eunuchs, slaves, and mutes,
Blacks, bravos, brigands, musketeers—as suits ;
The rape done with postillions, three or four,
And half a dozen horses, less or more ;—
The decorous rape, in dowager's landau—
It is not popular, a trifle slow ;—
The comic rape :—the lady must be fond ;—
Romantic, in a boat ;—requires a pond ;—
The rape Venetian—wants a blue lagoon ;—
The rape by moonlight, or without a moon—
Moonlight is dear, and always in demand ;—
The rape lugubrious, by blue lightning planned,
With challenge, single combats, clash of arms,
Great flapping hats, dark cloaks, and war's
alarms ;—

The rape emphatic, and the rape polite ;—
The rape with torches, *that's* a charming sight !
The rape in masks—we call that classical ;—
The rape gallant, done to sweet music's call ;—
The rape in sedan chair, *that's* new and gay,
The latest thing of all—and *distingué*.

BERGAMIN

[*scratching his head, to PASQUIN*].

What do you think ?

PASQUIN.

And you ?

BERGAMIN.

I think that—dash the cost !
 I think we should strike *hard*. Try *everything*—
almost !
 Order a rape —

STRAFOREL.

With trimmings ? As you like.

BERGAMIN.

Imagination is the thing to strike.
 Cloaks—sedan chairs—music—a torch—a mask !

STRAFOREL

[*taking notes in a book*].

I see, I see. I'll make it now my task
 To group the articles. As extras. With first-
class.

BERGAMIN.

Good !

STRAFOREL.

Soon I shall return. But, that my men
may pass,
This gentleman's park gate [*looking at PASQUIN*]
must stand ajar.

BERGAMIN.

It shall be opened.

STRAFOREL.

My lords, [*bows with flourish*] au revoir !
[*Stopping before going off.*]
A first-class, and with extras. That's the plan !
[*Exit, swaggering.*]

PASQUIN.

With all his show of honesty, your man
Has never named his price.

BERGAMIN.

Oh, let that trifle go !
Think ! we shall share one hearth ; this wall shall
be laid low.

PASQUIN.

Sweet thought ! next winter but one rent to pay !

BERGAMIN.

We'll study to improve these gardens, day by
day.

PASQUIN.

We'll trim the oldest trees.

BERGAMIN.

We'll pave the woodland ways.

PASQUIN.

Our monograms, in brightest flowers, shall blaze
United, in one frame.

BERGAMIN.

Where gloomy oak-trees grow——

PASQUIN

[*interrupting*].

—we'll light 'em up a bit. Hang glass balls in
a row!

BERGAMIN.

We'll make a brand-new pond, for goldfish to
adorn.

PASQUIN.

We'll have a fountain too; a rockery of our own;
A rockery set with ferns—with *ferns*, old chap,
you hear?

BERGAMIN.

What can man ask for more?

PASQUIN.

We'll bask in bliss, that's clear.

BERGAMIN.

You've married off your girl.

PASQUIN.

You've given your lad employ.

BERGAMIN.

Ah, my dear Pasquin !

PASQUIN.

Ah, my dear old boy !

[They fall into one another's arms. PERCINET and SYLVETTE enter abruptly from different sides.]

SYLVETTE

[seeing her father clasp BERGAMIN, and thinking they are fighting].

Ah !

BERGAMIN

[seeing SYLVETTE, to PASQUIN].

Lord ! Your daughter !

PERCINET

[seeing his father grasping PASQUIN].

Ah !

PASQUIN

[to BERGAMIN, seeing PERCINET].

The boy !

BERGAMIN

[*aside to PASQUIN*].

Let's fight !

[*They turn their embrace into a wrestling match.*]

PASQUIN.

Ruffian !

BERGAMIN.

You villain !

SYLVETTE

[*catching her father by his coat-tails*].

Papa !

PERCINET -

[*same business with BERGAMIN*].

Papa !

PASQUIN.

Right !

I'll teach you to insult me——

BERGAMIN.

You struck first——

PASQUIN.

Liar !

SYLVETTE.

Papa——

BERGAMIN.

Thief !

PERCINET.

Father——

PASQUIN.

Brigand !

BERGAMIN.

Thrice accursed !

SYLVETTE.

Papa——

[They succeed in separating them.]

PERCINET

[dragging off his father].

Come home. 'Tis late.

BERGAMIN

[struggling].

I'll tear his vitals out !

[PERCINET leads him off.]

PASQUIN

[*same business with SYLVETTE*].

I foam with rage !

SYLVETTE

[*leading him off*].

'Tis damp. Think if you caught the gout !

[*The daylight begins to fade slowly. The stage remains empty a moment. Then, in PASQUIN'S park, L., enter STRAFOREL, his MASKS, MUSICIANS, BRAVOS, etc.*]

STRAFOREL

[*with an air*].

Already the blue sky assumes a star.—

[*In a different voice, placing his men, pushing them about, etc.*]

Stand there,—and there.—And you—. Stay as
you are.

—Soon we shall hear the pensive vesper-bell,

See gentle Sylvia, all in white, appear.—

I give the signal.—

[*Looking up, he sees the moon rising.*]

Damme ! that looks well !

Here comes the moon.—Booked for success, that's
clear.

[*He examines the extravagant cloaks of the
BRAVOS.*]

Excellent cloaks.—But let the rapiers show.
Clap hand to hilt. [*To the nearest BRAVO.*] Truss
me those coat-tails. So !

[*The sedan chair is brought by BLACK BEARERS.*]

That chair comes over here. [*Looking at BEARERS.*]
Those blacks ?—Not bad at all.—

[*Speaking off stage.*]

Torch-bearers, over there—! don't move until I
call.

[*The back of the stage is lighted with vague rosy
reflections from the torches behind the trees.
Enter the MUSICIANS.*]

The players ? Let them group where the lights
shine like roses.

[*He arranges them at the back.*]

—Gracefully, now, and free.—Don't all take the
same poses !

Stand up, you mandoline.—Sit down there, you.

—Kneel ; so—

There ! [*fatuously*] that's my concert,—worthy
of Watteau.

PERCINET.

She comes—to Me!—O Sweetheart, past belief
I love you!—And the wind sounds like your
dress.

The flowers fade—or are my eyes grown dim?
The flowers fade, yet still their sweetness grows.

[He looks up.]

Yon star seems hanging down from Heaven's
rim.

And who makes music?—See! the darkness
grows.—

Yes, the sweet night has come ; and now
About the heaven's darkened brow
I see the stars, in shining row,

Light one by one.

The ponds awake, and, croaking, hail the dark ;
The stars redouble, spark by fiery spark ;
The moon—a swinging, growing, crescent bark—
Is pale and wan.

Diamonds and sapphires—jewels of the skies !—
I was your lover once ; and otherwise
I sang your praises, ere I saw Her rise
 Veiled all in white.

But I have fairer matter for my lays
Since that my Sylvia, with her childish ways
And soft hair clipped, child-fashion, round her face,
Brought the New Light.

Familiar stars ! my stars in heaven shining,
Whose numbers far exceed my poor divining,
Your beauty will indeed be reft and pining

When, through the twilight's bars,
She shall appear above the garden's vapours.

—Seeing Her eyes, your ineffective tapers
Shall pale, and cease their self-condemned labours—

Poor, jealous stars !

[*A bell rings, far off. Enter SYLVETTE, L.*]

SYLVETTE.

The vesper-bell. He waits—

[*A shrill signal-whistle. STRAFOREL starts up
before her ; the torches appear.*]

Ah !

[*The BRAVOS seize her and thrust her rapidly
into the sedan chair.*]

Rescue here !

PERCINET

[*starting forward*].

Damnation !

SYLVETTE.

Percinet !

PERCINET.

I'm coming, dear!

*[He draws sword, leaps over the wall, and fights
with several of the BRAVOS.]*

Hold—Hold—Hold—

[Fighting.]

STRAFOREL

[to the MUSICIANS].

Tremolo!

*[The FIDDLES execute a dramatic tremolo. The
BRAVOS fly and disperse.]*

[With theatrical emphasis.]

Now, by great Zeus,
The boy's a hero!

*[Duel between PERCINET and STRAFOREL. STRA-
FOREL suddenly claps his hand to his heart,
drops his sword, and staggers back.]*

Help! Help!

[Groans.]

'Tis no use—.

[He falls.]

PERCINET

[*running to SYLVETTE*].

Sylvia !

[*Tableau. She is in-the sedan chair, he on
his knees before her.*]

SYLVETTE.

My hero !

PASQUIN

[*appearing suddenly*].

Son of Bergamin !

[*To SYLVETTE.*]

What ! Your preserver ?—Girl ! you shall wed
him !

Son !—Hero !

PERCINET AND SYLVETTE.

Heavens !

[*BERGAMIN has entered on his own side, followed
by SERVANTS bearing torches.*]

PASQUIN

[*to BERGAMIN, who appears on the crest of
the wall*].

O Bergamin, forgive !

BERGAMIN

[*solemnly*].

My hate is shattered.

PASQUIN.

Let the children live !

PERCINET.

Sylvia, we're dreaming. Sylvia, do not seem
To breathe too deeply, lest we break our dream

BERGAMIN.

Feuds end in marriage since the first play writ.
—I am for peace. [*Pointing to the wall.*] Let us
have done with it !

PERCINET.

Who would have thought my father thus could
bend ?

SYLVETTE

[*simply*].

I always knew there'd be a happy end.

[*As they retire up stage with PASQUIN, STRA-
FOREL rises on his arm and holds out paper
on the point of his sword to BERGAMIN.*]

BERGAMIN.

Hullo ! What's that ? A paper ? [*He takes it.*]
Wait until
I've seen the signature. *What's this ?*

STRAFOREL

[*bowing*].

My little bill !

[*He falls back.*]

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

SCENE—Same as in ACT I., but the wall has disappeared. The stone benches which were against it have been moved R. and L. Modifications in the details: flower-beds, clumps of pampas-grass, trellised arbours, pretentious statues of imitation marble, greenhouse. R. a garden table; chairs.

The curtain rises on PASQUIN seated on bench L. reading a newspaper. At the back of the stage BLAISE with a rake.

BLAISE

[*raking*].

They tells me, master, Lawyer comes to-
night? . . .
Heigh! [*leans on rake*] 'tis a month since that
old wall went flat,
And you've kept house together.—Well, that's
right!

[Goes on raking, then stops to chuckle.]

Our pretty lovers won't complain o' *that*!

PASQUIN

[raising his head and looking about him].

Looks well without the wall, eh ?

BLAISE.

Lovely, sir.

PASQUIN

[complacently].

Yes ; an improvement. Cent. per cent., and—

[He bends over and feels a tuft of grass.] Hey ?—Who's wet *my* grass ? *[Furious.]* Some donkey,

I infer,

Has brought an early watering-pot this way.

[With explosion.] Water at night, old ob-
stinate !

BLAISE

[calmly.]

'Twas he—

'Twas Master Bergamin, sir ; never me.

PASQUIN.

Bergamin ? Hah ! *[With an effort.]* Well, well—

He will hold fast

To his own fancy.—'Water, first and last.'

As if judicious sprinkling, done with tact and
care ; . . .

Well, well !

[*To BLAISE.*]

—Bring out those flowering plants from there.

[*BLAISE sets in a row a lot of plants he fetches from the greenhouse. PASQUIN reads his paper. BERGAMIN appears at the back carrying an enormous water-pot.*]

BERGAMIN

[*watering the shrubs abundantly*].

Hah ! Stinted. Stinted of their natural food.—
Plants require *oceans* to do any good.—

[*Speaking to a tree.*]

Thirsty, old boy ?—I dearly love a tree !

—There ! [*watering*] take a bucketful, and think
o' me !

Another ?—Hah ! [*watering*] my park looks trim
and neat.

Nice, decent statues.

[*Puts down watering-pot and addresses tree.*]

There ! you've had your treat.

[*Catching sight of PASQUIN.*]

'Ullo !

Good morning.

[*No answer.*]

'Morning.

[*No answer. — With indignation.*]

I said,—'morning, sir!

PASQUIN

[*looking up, wearily*].

I see you all day long.—Oh, dear.—Why make
this stir?

BERGAMIN

[*taken aback*].

Hey?—Well?

[*He sees BLAISE arranging the pots. Roars.*]

Take in that stuff!

[*BLAISE, alarmed, drags off the plants hurriedly.*

PASQUIN *lifts his eyes to heaven, shrugs his shoulders, and reads.* BERGAMIN *strolls up and down, looking bored and unoccupied. He ends by sitting down beside PASQUIN. Silence. He speaks with a melancholy air.*]

Once, on a happier day,
This was the hour I chose to hide and steal away.

PASQUIN

[*dreamily, lowering his paper*].

I used to creep from home on light and thief-like
toe.

Ah! [*he sighs*] then I was amused!

BERGAMIN.

Our secret—?

PASQUIN

[*sighing*].

Yes; I know.

BERGAMIN.

Those children to mislead—to lure from off our
track;
Plots, plans, intrigues to build ere we could get
our crack——

PASQUIN.

To daily risk one's life. To daily climb that
wall—
Careless of collar-bones, and ribs, and dare the
fall!

BERGAMIN.

My conversation—your soliloquies—
Paid for by ruses such as Indians prize—.

PASQUIN.

Through furzy bushes forced to pick one's way,—
Yes, *that* amused me!

BERGAMIN.

On all fours, one day,
I crept triumphant—greened my breeches too!

PASQUIN

[*regretfully*].

We always, for abuse, found something new.

BERGAMIN.

Always some new charge.

PASQUIN.

Ah, that *was* amusing!

[*He yawns.*]

Old man?

BERGAMIN

[*yawning*].

Yes, Pasquin.

PASQUIN

[*mysteriously*].

We miss that abusing.

BERGAMIN

[*quickly*].

What stuff!

[*After reflecting.*]

We're dull—

Well, ye—es. It's true.

And *this* is

The Vengeance of Romance !

[*A silence. He watches PASQUIN, who goes
on reading. Aside.*]

—His waistcoat misses

Its daily button. Oh, dear me !

[*He gets up, walks away, returns, moves uneasily.*]

PASQUIN

[*looking at him over the top of his paper, aside*].

Poor wretch !

Poor, huge cockchafer ! ever on the stretch.

[*He pretends to read as BERGAMIN passes him
again.*]

BERGAMIN

[*watching him, aside*].

Yes. When he reads, he squints.

[*Goes up stage, whistling.*]

PASQUIN

[*aside, irritably*].

He whistles—it's a trick !

That everlasting tune ! [*Aloud.*] Dear boy, it
makes me sick.

BERGAMIN

[*smiling sardonically*].

My dear old chap ! [*with a superior air*] it is not
hard to spy
The mote that lurks within a neighbour's eye.
But your own beams——

PASQUIN.

Mine ? Mine ?

BERGAMIN

[*with irritation*].

Can't you stand still ? O dear !
I don't deny your cold ; your head is none so
clear ;
But need you *always* sniff ?—sniff comes from
snuff—
And twenty times a day——

PASQUIN

[*interrupting*].

There, there ! Enough !

BERGAMIN.

And *forty* times a day you tell the same old story !
—At dinner, your bread-pills keep up their
trajectory.—

[PASQUIN, *listening to him, seated, swings his foot
to and fro impatiently.*]

You cannot even sit in your own elbow-
 chair
 Unless you shake a leg. [*Critically.*] They're
not a handsome pair!

PASQUIN.

All right. Now we are grown blue-mouldy with
ennui,
 You've nothing better left than to pick holes
 in me.—
 You've counted up *my* faults—made a damn
 friendly list;
 But life in common, sir, homelife's an oculist!
 —*My* cataract's removed, I'd have you know.—
 I see
 How false you are! how base! a miser;—worse
 than me!
 You're like a fly to microscopic view!—
 Your faults all swell, and swell—.

[*Holds up hands of horror.*]

The monstrous crew!

[*A short silence.*]

BERGAMIN

[*with affected indifference.*]

What I once questioned, I don't doubt at
 all.

PASQUIN

[*naïvely*].

What ?

BERGAMIN

[*pointing to where wall stood*].

You miss *that*.

PASQUIN.

You're *lost* without the wall !

BERGAMIN.

Thanks. I've enough of seeing you each day.

PASQUIN

[*violently*].

My life is gone, since you came here to stay.

BERGAMIN

[*very dignified*].

Well, sir, 'tis well. 'Tis very good indeed.

Our plans were laid, I think——

PASQUIN.

To suit another's need !

BERGAMIN.

For our poor children's sake——

PASQUIN.

—It was of them I spoke.—

[*Convinced, with emotion.*]

Yes. Let us bend our heads, in silence, 'neath
that yoke.

—O my lost freedom!

BERGAMIN

[*bitterly*].

Parents *always* pay.

—They *live* by sacrifice.—

[*SYLVETTE and PERCINET appear L., back of stage, among the trees; they slowly cross the stage, clasping one another, and with exalted gestures.*]

PASQUIN

[*to BERGAMIN*].

Hush! hush, I say!

—Enter the Lovers.

BERGAMIN

[*sneering*].

Hah! the newest pose is
To walk about in your apotheosis.

PASQUIN.

Since the betrothal they're absurd, I swear!—

[*discontentedly*]

You'd think that they wore haloes in their hair.

BERGAMIN.

This is the hour when—mimicking the slow
And pious gestures of Love's Pilgrim's Show—
They come each day ; and here, as at a shrine,
Adore the sacred scene—of Straforel's rapine.

[SYLVETTE and PERCINET, *who disappeared from
right, reappear and come slowly down stage.*]

BERGAMIN.

Lo ! the Young Pilgrims !

PASQUIN.

Worshipping themselves !

—Let's hide and listen.

[*They retire behind a clump of shrubs, and are
seen at intervals listening, peering over the
bushes, etc.*]

PERCINET.

—how above all else

I love you—.

SYLVETTE

[*in a murmur*].

—love you—. [*They pause.*]

Hallowed spot, and dear— !

[*She points to the place of the rape.*]

PERCINET.

Yes, here it happened; [*pointing*] that last brute
fell here.

SYLVETTE.

I was Andromeda, chained to yon rock.

PERCINET.

Here, I was Perseus.

SYLVETTE.

Love!—the sudden shock—
I could not count your foes. You fought
with——

PERCINET.

Perhaps ten.

SYLVETTE.

Ten? They were twenty! all gigantic men.
—And that last ravening monster whom you
slew!

Thirty [*with conviction*]*—at least!*

PERCINET

[*modestly*].

Thirty;—or thirty-two.

SYLVETTE

[*adoring him*].

Tell me once more how, with his sword in hand,
And eyes ablaze, My Conqueror drove that band.

PERCINET.

I first engaged in tierce—[*hesitating*—at least,
I think—.

[*Fatuously.*]

I only know they fell, and fell, as pebbles sink.

SYLVETTE.

Dear, if it were not for your golden hair
You would be Cæsar !

PERCINET.

Yes, [*deprecating*] *I am*—more fair.

SYLVETTE

[*with enthusiasm*].

What lacks our love but to be writ in song ?

PERCINET.

Darling, it shall be.

SYLVETTE.

Darling !

PERCINET.

We'll prolong

Our love through epics.

SYLVETTE.

O, how dreams come true !

For you must know,—long ere I met with you—
I vowed to wed some high heroic mate—
Some one my father would think—desperate !

PERCINET.

Sweet !

SYLVETTE

[*confidentially*].

O, *his* choice was—just the Usual Man,
The blameless creature girls refuse,—who can !
Though, still encouraged by his maiden aunts,
The object '*dares to hope*.' [*Scornfully.*] He '*dares*' !

PERCINET.

Or vaunts

His father's riches :—says, ' His father's trees
March with *your* father's orchard.' [*With an*
outburst.] Families !
What crimes are still committed in your name !
Romance how wronged ! High love how bowed
and tame !

BERGAMIN

[*behind his tree*].

Pooh !

SYLVETTE

[*clasping her hands*].

O how true !—But, Percinet, [*laughing*]
how cross

Our fathers have become ! They—snarl——

PERCINET

[*laughing*].

They gore and toss !

They paw the earth !

PASQUIN

[*protesting*].

Ahem !

PERCINET

[*lightly, scornfully*].

I know the reason why.

BERGAMIN

[*curiously*].

Hallo— ? [*Peers over bush.*]

PERCINET.

Crawling on earth, they have to watch
us fly !
—How should their ashes understand our flame ?

BERGAMIN.

Young devil ! [*Looking over bush.*]

PERCINET.

I *respect* them all the same—
Good, worthy burghers : only, are they quite——

PASQUIN

[*indignantly*].

Quite what ?

PERCINET.

To call them—jealous—would not be polite.

SYLVETTE

[*cheerfully*].

Of course, *they* only fill a second place.

PERCINET

[*laughing*].

My beaver's cocked too high to suit *their* ways.

SYLVETTE.

Your father, in your presence, has the air,
The awkward air of—[*coquettishly*—dare I say it ?

PERCINET.

Dare !

SYLVETTE.

A tame duck who has hatched an eagle's egg.

BERGAMIN

[*aside*].

God bless my soul !

SYLVETTE

[*laughing still more exasperatingly*].

Their pardon I could beg——

PASQUIN

[*aside*].

Quite right !

SYLVETTE.

—when I remember how we fooled them, dear ;
We, helped by Love.

PERCINET.

Oh ! Destiny is clear
Upon that point. However loves meander,
Kind Fate still plays the valet to Leander.

E

BERGAMIN

[*scornfully*].

Ho ! ho !

SYLVETTE

[*sentimental ; after a short pause*].

Our marriage-contract hour draws near.

PERCINET.

Oh ! I forgot the fiddles !

SYLVETTE

[*reproachfully*].

Oh, my dear !

PERCINET

[*apologetic*].

I fly !

SYLVETTE

[*tenderly*].

Nay, I forgive.

[*She stops him as he starts off.*]

Your lady condescends
To walk with you to where the greensward ends.

[*They walk off together, embracing one another.*

SYLVETTE *bridles, and speaks with many airs
and graces.*]

SYLVETTE.

The great Old Lovers were, methinks, like Us.

PERCINET.

Yes ; we take rank in the Immortal Band.

SYLVETTE.

Romeo and Juliet,——

PERCINET.

Thisbe ; Pyramus,——

SYLVETTE.

Arminta and her Shepherd,——

PERCINET.

Iseult, the White Hand.

SYLVETTE.

And Guinevere,——

*[They go off the scene, but their voices are still
heard behind the trees.]*

The voice of PERCINET.

He, of the Naked Sword,——

The voice of SYLVETTE.

Petrarch and Laura,—

[The voices die away.]

BERGAMIN

[coming out from behind the shrubbery].

O good Lord ! Go-od Lord !

PASQUIN

[following him and speaking with derision].

My compliments, dear sir, upon your plan,

[bows derisively]

Your great success, O great, sagacious man !
No doubt it serves some secret end you had,
But, in one word, you've driven those children
—mad !

BERGAMIN.

Well, yes, your girl is certainly a bore.
She and her rape ! *[Shrugs his shoulders.]* Was
no maid wed before ?

PASQUIN

[piqued].

As for your son, the Hero-Popinjay, *[irritably]*
My nerves won't stand his airs another day.

BERGAMIN.

But what revolts *me* is the way they dare
Discuss us both—as if we only were
Two harmless idiots of inferior sort.
We shut our eyes and let them have their sport,
And when we shut our eyes they call us—blind.

[*Pettishly.*]

I am a fool for minding, yet I mind !

PASQUIN

[*same manner*].

Had you not thought of that, sagacious man ?
Was that no part of your inspired plan ?
—Ho ! here's a youth who sets us in our true
place,
And as for *him*—the king may tie his shoe-lace !

BERGAMIN.

I'll lace him yet !

PASQUIN.

I'm going to tell them—all.

BERGAMIN.

No, no ! Not yet ! Don't be nonsensical !
—Wait for the marriage. [*Grimly.*] As a
wedding gift
We'll tell 'em some few facts. Till then, make
shift
To look as dumb as—fish.

PASQUIN.

Fish caught in their own net.

—But that's your plan, no doubt—your plan !

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*]

BERGAMIN

[*angrily.*]

Sir ! you forget,

You egged me on.

PASQUIN.

I ?—Never ! 'Twas mere fun.

BERGAMIN

[*aside.*]

This man will drive me mad !

[*Enter SYLVETTE gaily. She has a branch of blossom in her hand, with which she makes signs off stage to PERCINET, whom she has just left. She comes down stage, smiling, and stands between the two fathers.*]

SYLVETTE

[*gaily.*]

Good morning, every one.

Good morning, my papa !—Father-in-law, good
day !

BERGAMIN

[*sulkily*].

'Day, future daughter.

SYLVETTE

[*imitating his voice*].

Fu—ture daugh—ter !

What a way ! [*Pertly.*]

—You look so cross.

BERGAMIN

[*sulkily*].

It's Pasquin——

[SYLVETTE, *shaking the branch to and fro before his face, and speaking patronisingly as to a naughty child.*]

SYLVETTE.

Hu—sh ! Be calm !

I come as Peace. Behold me with my Palm !

[*She waves branch affectedly. Patronisingly.*]

You hate each other still a little, eh ?

[*She looks from one to the other.*]

—Rome was not built, remember, in one day.—
And you were foes so long——

PASQUIN

[*aside*].

O irony of Fate !

BERGAMIN

[*ironical*].

Most true, most wise young maid ! You're
witness to our hate.

SYLVETTE.

A mortal hatred, too !—Oh, I remember well
The things *you* used to say—.

[*Pointing to BERGAMIN with her branch.*]

Don't fear ! [*coquettishly*] I
shall not tell

All that you said of *him*—

[*pointing to PASQUIN*]

—there, by your big rose-bed,
And never guessed, ha, ha ! that I heard all you
said,
Hid by my dear old wall.

BERGAMIN

[*aside*].

The girl's a simple fool !

SYLVETTE

[*turning to PASQUIN*].

For [*with emphasis*] every single day,—at dawn,
—by twilight cool,—
I met my Percinet! And neither of you
once
—No, neither!—had a doubt.

PASQUIN

[*ironically*].

Forgive me, I'm a dunce ;
And *he*—— [*pointing to BERGAMIN*].

SYLVETTE

[*with importance, interrupting*].For you must know, I saw him *every day*.[*To BERGAMIN.*]

—Do you remember still that time my Percinet
Swore he would wed romance ? Ha, ha ! How
wild you were !
I heard it all. And you'll admit, dear sir,
Percinet keeps his word.

BERGAMIN

[*vexed*].

You think so ? [*Sneering.*] You're quite sure ?
And if I laid my plans——

SYLVETTE

[*Pompously, imitating PERCINET'S way of speaking*].

Plans change. Lovers endure.

[*Childishly.*]

I've read, a hundred times, how lovers' dreams
succeed
And cruel fathers yield. Why should they not,
indeed?
They're human, after all. They can't *want* to be
hated.

BERGAMIN.

They can't—? O let me laugh!

[*To SYLVETTE, ironically.*]

—So *that's* how you got mated?

SYLVETTE

[*tossing her head*].

We've proved it true!

BERGAMIN.

Oh, if I cared to say——

SYLVETTE

[*quickly*].

What?

BERGAMIN.

Nothing!

SYLVETTE

[after looking at him ; with discomfort].

You look—very strange to-day.

BERGAMIN

[ironically].

Why should I? *[Aside.]* Ho! I almost think
I will——

PASQUIN.

With just one word—.

[Aside, going up stage.]

Best keep the secret still.

[A slight pause.]

SYLVETTE

[defiantly, but uneasily].

'Tis easiest not to speak when naught's to say!

PASQUIN

[turning about, in an explosive manner].

Naught? Naught, she calls it? Poor tricked,
blinded may!

What! *[turning on her]* you believe that things
can happen so?

That locked park gates fly open at a blow?

BERGAMIN

[*same manner*].

She thinks, ho ! ho ! that Love still wears a mask !

SYLVETTE

[*puzzled, offended, half suspicious*].

I—I believe—. What do you mean ?

BERGAMIN

[*getting excited*].

I ask
Yourself, what do *you* mean ? Since this old world
began,
Poets, and love-sick fools, exalt the *younger* man—
Poets, and idiot girls, who make their boast
That only curling locks shall rule the roast.
But lo ! the hour of vengeance now has struck,
And wigs—your *fathers'* wigs—have all the luck.

SYLVETTE.

But——

BERGAMIN

[*growing excited*].

Oh, I know ! I know we represent
All that is out of date, and weak, and impotent !

[*Mocking.*]

Poor doting men who doze in thick night-gear ;
Dull cats while mice carouse.—We've heard *you*
talking, dear !

But those are ancient tales. The modern father,
Miss,
You'll find—I fear you'll find—is very far from
this.
And as we knew you both—you and your
Percinet—
We just forbade your love, to *make you* disobey!

SYLVETTE.

What! [*Overcome.*] What!—you *knew*?

PASQUIN

[*triumphant*].

Of course we did, you—child!

SYLVETTE

[*still incredulous*].

Our meetings—?

BERGAMIN

[*patronising*].

I applauded!

PASQUIN.

And *I* smiled!

SYLVETTE.

The—benches that we climbed—?

PASQUIN.

I placed them there for you.

SYLVETTE.

The—duel ?

BERGAMIN

[*bows mockingly*].

Our small joke !

SYLVETTE.

The bravos ?

PASQUIN

[*bows same way*].

Our paid crew !

SYLVETTE.

My rape ? [*With sudden fire.*] Ah no !—'Tis false !

BERGAMIN

[*searching in his pockets*].

I'll show you,—that I will !

—Here, in my pocket, see——

[*He produces STRAFOREL'S bill. SYLVETTE snatches the paper from him and tears it open.*]

SYLVETTE

[*reading aloud*].

‘To Straforel (as per bill):
One imitation rape, to bring betrothal on—’
Ah! [*She reads.*] ‘Eight best bravos’ cloaks,
with discount, two pounds one.
Eight masks——’

BERGAMIN

[*to PASQUIN, uneasily, after watching her*].

Upon my life! I think we spoke too soon.

SYLVETTE

[*reading*].

‘One sedan chair, silk lined——’
[*She looks up.*] It was silk! [*Reads.*] ‘One full
moon.’

[*Ironically.*] I see you spared no pains!

[*She throws down the bill on the table and
laughs nervously.*]

PASQUIN

[*surprised*].

Then you’re not angry, dear?

SYLVETTE

[*with elaborate graciousness*].

Papa! ’tis all a joke.

[*Turning sweetly to BERGAMIN.*]

You've wasted wit, I fear,
Dear Master Bergamin, if you indeed suppose
I only love your son for reasons such as—those.

[*She points to paper on table.*]

PASQUIN

[*delighted*].

She takes it very well!

BERGAMIN

[*to SYLVETTE*].

You take it very well!

PASQUIN.

Shall *I* tell Percinet?

SYLVETTE

[*sharply*].

For Heaven's sake, don't tell!

[*Recovering herself, and smiling, with an effort.*]

—Don't tell him. Men, you know, dear father,
are so—curious

BERGAMIN

[*approving*].

Now, here's good sense at last.

[To SYLVETTE.]

I thought you would be furious,
But [*looking at his watch*] oh, by Jove, it's time—!

—It's time to go and dress.
Your contract's still to sign.

[*Holding out his hand to SYLVETTE.*]

—Good friends?

SYLVETTE

[*with honeyed smiles.*]

I can't express
How much I thank you, sir!

[*She curtsies.*]

BERGAMIN

[*still a little doubtful, comes back.*]

Then—you won't hate me, then?

SYLVETTE.

I?

[*He leaves the stage, followed by PASQUIN. She looks after BERGAMIN, her whole expression changing. She speaks with cold, deliberate rage.*]

But I—think—you—are—the Very Worst
of men!

[Enter PERCINET joyously.]

PERCINET

Still where I left you, darling? Can't you bear
to go
Far from the memoried spot which saw me strike
that blow?
A rare adventure! [*Joyously.*] Love! you prize
it well.

SYLVETTE

[*stonily.*]

I—prize it.

PERCINET.

There!—just by your foot, you fell
Half-fainting, yet alive, to watch me slay a host—
Thirty strong men!

SYLVETTE

[*pettishly.*]

Say—*ten.* And at the very most.

PERCINET

[*solicitously, drawing nearer.*]

Darling, what ails you? You look sad, most dear!
Surely [*fatuously*] those mem'ries do not still
cause fear?
—O blue eyes! smile from out those gathering
mists!
Blue sapphire eyes, that melt to amethysts!

SYLVETTE

[*aside*].

I call that—stilted !

PERCINET

[*reassuringly*].

Oh, I see—I guess !
What tender sadness lurks about this place.
—You miss our dear, our sacred moss-grown wall,
Which sheltered our young hopes and our sweet fears ;
Yet what is glory-crowned can never truly fall,—
Our Romeo's balcony survives the stress of years.

SYLVETTE

[*impatient, irritated*].

Ah !

PERCINET

[*lyrically*].

In the splendour of eternal morn,
Bathed in young light, that white old balcony
Still bears a silken ladder, all unworn,
That flutters by an ever-blossoming tree.

[*She looks up impatiently, without speaking.*]

PERCINET

[with increasing emphasis].

—Unchanging background to undying passion !

SYLVETTE

[irritated].

Oh !

PERCINET.

That is how our own wall still is set,
Where, in the same romantic, magic fashion
We learned to love——

SYLVETTE

[aside].

What ! is he talking yet ?

PERCINET

[with a fatuous smile].

Lo, now, my lady in her sovereignty
Has deigned to order that our loves shall be
Proclaimed in fairest verse——

SYLVETTE

[anxiously].

And so ?

PERCINET

[*with beaming satisfaction*].

I have begun to write !

SYLVETTE

[*contemptuously*].

What ! *you* make rhymes ?

PERCINET

[*on his dignity*].

Love,—had I learned to fight ?

[*Confidentially*].

Hear my beginning. Just a lyric burst.

[*Recites.*]

The Father's Feud : A Poem.

SYLVETTE.

Oh !

PERCINET.

Book first.

[*He strikes an attitude for declaiming.*]

SYLVETTE.

Oh !

PERCINET.

What's the matter ?

SYLVETTE.

Joy . . . pride . . . rapture . . . my nerves, dear !

[She bursts into tears.]

Oh, let me be alone !

[She turns her back upon him, still sitting on the bench, and hides her face in her handkerchief.]

PERCINET

[bewildered].

My Sweet ! I'll leave you here.

[Aside, with a meaning smile.]

A day like this !—Poor little thing.—She's shy.

[He goes up stage R., sees on the table the paper containing STRAFOREL'S bill, and taking a pencil from his pocket sits down saying :]

—We'll note those lines, since inspirations fly.—

[He begins to write, but stops, holding his pencil in the air, and reads.]

'To Straforel is debtor : insomuch as he

'Did feign to die and fall, with all solemnity,

'Before a boy's weak blade : one torn coat, three
pound ten ;

'—To wounded pride, ten guineas.'—

[He smiles.]

What strange men !

[He continues reading to himself. The smile vanishes. His eyes become fixed and staring.]

SYLVETTE

[still on the bench, wiping her eyes].

Oh, if he guessed, how his poor pride would bleed!
I almost said it once. I must take better heed.

PERCINET

[getting up].

Ho! ho!

[He laughs with forced mirth.]

SYLVETTE

[turning towards him].

What's that?

PERCINET

[hiding the bill behind him].

Oh, nothing!

SYLVETTE

[aside].

Ah, what care!

[She sighs.]

PERCINET

[aside].

I see now why they found no dead man there.

SYLVETTE

[*aside, rising*].

He seems abashed. What would be best to
say?

[*She moves towards him. Seeing he does not
notice her, she says coquettishly:*]

You've never said you like my gown to-day?

PERCINET

[*absently*].

Blue does not suit you. You should dress in pink.

SYLVETTE

[*aside, much alarmed*].

Blue—does—not—suit?—He has begun to think!

[*Looking at the table.*]

I left that man's bill there!

PERCINET

[*irritably*].

What are you fussing over?

SYLVETTE.

Nothing. [*Aside.*] Perhaps the wind has played
the thieving lover.

[*Aloud, shaking out her skirts.*]

Nothing. I only looked at my despised dress.
It's—blue. [*Aside.*] If he has seen it he will
soon confess.

[*Aloud.*] But where's your dear love-poem?

[PERCINET *starts.* *She takes his arm and
speaks coaxingly.*]

My dearest! say it now!

PERCINET

[*sharply.*]

Oh 'no!

SYLVETTE.

Yes. Say it!

PERCINET.

No!

SYLVETTE

[*ironically.*]

Not to redeem your vow?

PERCINET.

My verses are not worth——

SYLVETTE

[*interrupting.*]

Their cost we cannot tell!

PERCINET.

What do you mean ?

[*He starts, and looks at her, suspicious.*]

SYLVETTE.

I mean, [*violently*] they 're not
by Straforel !

PERCINET.

Why ! then she knows ?

SYLVETTE.

He knows ?

SYLVETTE AND PERCINET

[*together*].

I know ;—and so do you !

[*A silence. They look at one another, then
laugh a forced laugh.*]

Ha ! ha ! ha !

PERCINET.

What a joke !

SYLVETTE.

Yes. *What* a joke ! So—new.

PERCINET.

They 've made us play a part.

SYLVETTE

[*bitterly*].

And *such* a part, my dear !

PERCINET.

Our fathers were fast friends.

SYLVETTE.

Dear neighbours : yes, that's clear.

PERCINET.

Like brothers !

SYLVETTE.

Yes ; you seem—a cousin, if you please.

[*She drops an ironical curtsy.*]

PERCINET.

I wed—my cousin.

SYLVETTE

[*protesting*].

Oh !

PERCINET.

[*patronisingly*].

'Tis—classic.

SYLVETTE.

Yet one sees

Marriages that are more——

[She shrugs her shoulders slightly.]

—Well! there's a certain beauty

When people can—like us—indulge in love, *and*
duty!*[Although they continue to smile throughout this scene, their voices grow steadily more biting and their manner more irritated.]*

PERCINET.

Duty, and the Main Chance,—these two parks
and the farms—.

SYLVETTE.

So excellent! So wise! Who'd sigh for love's
alarms?

—Yes; 'neath that wall our idyl's buried deep.

PERCINET.

There is no idyl left.

SYLVETTE.

I'm one now of the heap
Of dutiful young girls.

PERCINET.

Wed, wed in open mart.

—It was as Romeo that I won your heart!

SYLVETTE.

That you were Romeo—once—we'd best forget.

PERCINET.

My dear, you don't still think you're Juliet?

SYLVETTE.

You're growing—bitter.

PERCINET.

You—a trifle sour.

SYLVETTE.

If you're absurd, good heavens! have *I* power
To save you from it?

PERCINET.

If I was—absurd—

Was I the only one?

SYLVETTE.

All that's occurred
Is past and done.—But ah! my poor Blue Rose,
I've seen your petals drop. [*Maliciously.*] Drop
like those pseudo-foes!

PERCINET

[*sneering*].

That imitation rape!

SYLVETTE.

Yes, all the time.

Our nightingale was but a cackling goose !

PERCINET.

Our wall—my wall I vowed to such immortal use,
Was but a puppet-stand, a stage whereon each
day

We climbed and strutted, just as puppets may !
We posed as angels there—spread dazzling
wings,
And, all the time, our fathers worked the strings !

SYLVETTE.

Alas !—And yet [*thoughtfully*] still more gro-
tesque we'd be
If we ceased loving.

PERCINET.

Let's love furiously !
And, to begin with, we're compelled to love.

SYLVETTE.

But—we adore each other.

PERCINET.

That's what we must prove.

SYLVETTE

[*with forced amiability*].

'Tis only love could make us bear this blow ;
Is it not,—treasure ?

PERCINET

[*same manner*].

Angel ! it is so.

SYLVETTE

[*growing ironical*].

Good-bye, then, dearest Soul !

PERCINET

[*same manner*].

My only Joy, adieu !

SYLVETTE.

I'll dream of you, dear Heart !

PERCINET.

Dear Heart ! I'll dream of you.

SYLVETTE

[*snappishly*].

I go away—to dream.

PERCINET

[same manner].

I leave you—just to muse.

SYLVETTE

[recovering herself enough to smile at him].

Good night!

PERCINET.

Good-bye !— [*Same manner.*]

[Exit SYLVETTE.]

PERCINET

[looks after her a moment, then says with an air of determined rage].

My temper I won't lose !

[After a pause ; increasing bitterness.]

—*She treat me thus?* - [*Enter STRAFOREL, who slowly and majestically comes down stage.*] But who is yonder wight

In curious small clothes and huge mantle
 dight,
This much moustachioed, swagg'ring cavalier?

[To STRAFOREL, *after contemplating him in silence.*]

What is it?

STRAFOREL

[*smiling*].

A small reckoning brings me here.

PERCINET

[*impertinently*].

A tradesman ?

STRAFOREL

[*still smiling, bows mockingly*].

It would seem so.

[*With a change of manner to patronage.*]

Run, my worthy youth,
Tell your papa I'm waiting.

[*He struts away, humming an air.*]

PERCINET

[*after staring in wild indignation*].

I—to run ? God's truth !
[*Insolently.*] What is your name, sir ?

STRAFOREL

[*striking an attitude*].

I—am Straforel.

PERCINET

[*losing all control*].

What! *you* here? *You*!

[*He recovers himself and speaks with cold fury.*]

Sir! it is very well.—

It is not to be borne.—

STRAFOREL

[*smiling*].

So ho! the dear boy guesses?

PERCINET

[*throws at him the bill, which he draws all crumpled out of his pocket*].

Ruffian—take that!

STRAFOREL

[*disdainfully*].

Dear child, avoid excesses!

[*Strikes new attitude.*] I say, I'm Straforel.

PERCINET.

Kind Heaven, that sent this man!

Why, I would range the earth——

STRAFOREL

[*complacently, interrupting*].

That were a lengthy plan.

[*Mocking.*]

Quell that remorse, dear boy ; the victims whom
 you slay
 Are not in desperate case. [*Laughing.*] Behold me !

PERCINET

[savagely, between his teeth].

There's a way!

[*He draws his sword and rushes at STRAFOREL furiously. STRAFOREL does not draw his sword but defends himself with his arm, as easily and securely as a fencing-master giving a lesson to a beginner.*]

STRAFOREL.

Up!—up that wrist!—That foot more back.—A
 At your age—to ignore—the—simplest fencing
 —game.

[*He defends himself between the words, and disarms*
 PERCINET. *He hands him back his sword*
with an exaggerated bow.]

What! is your lesson over? Won't you play?

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PERCINET

[humiliated, beside himself with rage].

Oh, I am but a schoolboy ; but——

[with a sudden revulsion of feeling]

Nay, nay,

I'll have—revenge ! *[He seizes the sword.]*

I'll have my own affairs !

I'll drink and dice and brawl until the whole
world stares !

Don Juan's shade shall blush,—I'll love the ballet-
corps !

[He runs off the stage brandishing his sword.]

STRAFOREL

[good-naturedly].

Nice boy ! But who the deuce is now to pay
my score ?

[A sound of furious quarrelling is heard off stage.]

[STRAFOREL peering behind the scenes.]

What's that ? Who's there ? Who——

[He bursts into violent laughter.]

Save us, Heavenly Powers !

[Enter BERGAMIN and PASQUIN in disorder, without their wigs, their clothes all torn as after a combat.]

PASQUIN

[*readjusting his dress and handing BERGAMIN his wig. In a breathless voice, with immense dignity*].

There is your wig, sir.

BERGAMIN

[*half choked*].

Sir, I give you yours.

PASQUIN.

You understand that after such a scene—
There is your ruffle. [*Gives him torn ruffle.*]

BERGAMIN

[*his voice cracking ; great dignity*].

Sir, I've patient been,
But after this, not even for my son
Will I endure to live——

PASQUIN

[*catching sight of SYLVETTE, who enters*].

My daughter ! Hush ! Begone !

SYLVETTE

[*throwing herself into her father's arms*].

Papa ! I will not marry Percinet !

[*Enter the NOTARY for the wedding contract, and the WITNESSES in their finest attire.*]

BERGAMIN

[*losing his head*].

The witnesses ?—the notary ?—Devils !

WITNESSES

[*scandalised*].

Hey ?

NOTARY

[*shocked and pompous*].

Such words to me !

[*STRAFOREL, in the midst of the uproar, has picked up and smoothed out the bill thrown at him by PERCINET.*]

STRAFOREL

[*thrusting the paper in BERGAMIN's face*].

Pay me ;—in guineas ;—eighty-nine.

[*Enter the wedding-guests and three fiddlers playing a minuet.*]

BERGAMIN

[*beside himself, shoving people about*].

O devils ! Fiddles ! Devils ! [To STRAFOREL.] I
decline

To listen. [*With explosion.*] Devils !

[*The fiddlers continue playing automatically.*]

STRAFOREL

[*impatiently to BERGAMIN.*]Sir, sir ! will you answer that ? [*Indicates paper.*]

BERGAMIN.

Ask Pasquin.

PASQUIN.

No ! ask *him* ! [*Indicating BERGAMIN.*]

STRAFOREL.

What ! shall I hold my hat ?

[*He reads with emphasis the words of the bill :*]‘*One false rape, set in action to betroth——*’

BERGAMIN.

They’re *not* betrothèd, and their broken oath
Breaks off your bargain.

STRAFOREL

[*to PASQUIN.*]

Sir !

PASQUIN

[*protesting.*]Now all is ended ? [*Pettishly.*] Why should *I* pay
Hang you ! go
away !

[BLAISE, *who enters, speaks apart*
to BERGAMIN.]

BERGAMIN

[*overcome*].

My son has left me !

SYLVETTE

[*taken aback*].

Gone ?

[STRAFOREL, *who was going up stage, stops short*
and looks at her attentively.]

STRAFOREL.

Hallo—?

BERGAMIN.

Oh, fly

After him ! Quick !

[*He runs off stage, followed by the* NOTARY
and the wedding-guests.]

SYLVETTE

[*with deep emotion*].

Gone !

[STRAFOREL, *coming back and watching her.*]

STRAFOREL

[*aside*].

Is it writ that I
Shall bring these lambs together, in one fold ?

SYLVETTE

[*with sudden fury of indignation*].

Gone ? No ; that is *too* much !

[*Exit, followed by PASQUIN.*]

STRAFOREL

[*triumphantly*].

Cheer up, my boy ! Behold,
If you would earn the guineas of your bill,
Here are two lovers, to be dealt with still !

[*Exit. The three fiddlers, left alone in the middle
of the stage, continue to play their minuet.*]

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III

SAME SCENE. *Materials for the rebuilding of the wall lie scattered about. Heaps of lime. Workmen's tools.*

BERGAMIN and PASQUIN, each on a different side, are inspecting the work. A MASON is working at the wall, kneeling with his back to the audience.

THE MASON

[*singing as he works*].

Fol-lol-de-ri-do !

BERGAMIN

[*discontentedly*].

All workmen are so slow.

THE MASON.

Fol-lol-de-ri-do !

PASQUIN

[*watching him with satisfaction*].

That's where the new bricks go !

BERGAMIN

Ha ! now a touch of plaster !

PASQUIN.

Ho ! now a splash of lime !

THE MASON

[singing in operatic fashion].

De ri-do ! De ri-do ! De ri, de ri, de ri-i-i-me !

PASQUIN.

Good voice. The work is bad.

[He comes down stage.]

BERGAMIN

*[coming down stage, speaks with aggressive cheerfulness].*Ha, ha ! and now—look here,
My wall is well begun.

PASQUIN

*[stamping upon the spot where the wall is down].*To-morrow noon, 'tis clear,
My wall will count two feet—two feet of wall,
by Jove !

BERGAMIN

[*in a lyric outburst*].

Wall of *my* dreams, arise ! arise and be my love !

PASQUIN

[*sharply*].

Did you speak, sir ?

BERGAMIN

[*with dignity*].

I spoke. [*Sneering.*] I hope I have
the right ? [*A pause.*]

BERGAMIN

[*abruptly, confidentially*].

Ahem ! . . . How go the cards ? Who plays
with you at night ?

PASQUIN

[*drearily*].

No one. And you ?

BERGAMIN

I ? No one.

[*A pause. They bow ceremoniously to one
another and walk about.*]

PASQUIN

[*standing still*].

You've not heard

News of your son ?

BERGAMIN.

No. Nothing.

PASQUIN

[*politely*].

Not a word ?

'Pon my faith, neighbour, thieves will pluck him
close

Ere *he* returns !

BERGAMIN.

I thank you.

PASQUIN

[*chuckling*].

Ah, boys, boys !

[*They salute one another and walk about. A pause.*]

PASQUIN

[*stopping short*].

Now that my sheltering wall stands firm once

more,

I don't object—. [*He hesitates.*—I don't forbid
my door.

Come in—sometimes—to see me.

BERGAMIN

[*stiffly*].

When I choose I'll come.

[*They bow ceremoniously.*]

PASQUIN

[*abruptly*].

I say, come now. The cards are laid at home.

BERGAMIN

[*hesitating*].

But can I?—I don't know.—I have not understood——

PASQUIN.

But—since the cards are laid!

[*Coaxingly.*]

One cribbage to the good.

BERGAMIN

[*with dignity*].

I'd rather play bezique.

PASQUIN.

Come quick!

[*He turns to go.*]

BERGAMIN

[*following him*].

You owe me still——

PASQUIN

[*waving his hand to the MASON*].

Work well, my man !

THE MASON

[*at the top of his voice*].

Tra-la !

BERGAMIN

[*patronisingly*].

Fine voice that, if you will !

[*Exeunt. As they go off the stage the MASON turns round and takes off his hat, revealing STRAFOREL.*]

STRAFOREL

[*imitating PASQUIN'S voice*].

Work well, my man !

*His man ! work well ! ha ! ha ! and all
Because I'm come, disguised, to furbish up their
wall !*

[*He sits down upon the unfinished piece of wall.*]

The youngster's still afield ; still gaping after
fame.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*]

It needs no magic glass to follow out *that* game !
Prodigal sons return. We'll leave him for a
day,
For life—great Mistress Life—to teach him her
own way ;
To douse him with chill facts ; to clip his wand'ring
wing,
And send him whimpering home. Meanwhile, I
sit and sing,
Plotting to cure fair Sylvia of her craze
For new adventure. In the golden days
When I went ruffling through the country towns,
Squand'ring my wits on thick-head louts and
clowns,
I often played the duke ; 'tis but a marquis now,
So at it, boy, and——

[*he draws a letter from his doublet, and hides it
in the mossy trunk of a tree*]

Ha ! These fathers, you'll allow,
Do owe me——

[*seeing SYLVETTE approach*]

Why, 'tis she, the fair fantastic may !

[*He seizes his trowel and disappears behind the
wall. SYLVETTE appears. She looks about
her furtively, making sure she is not watched.*]

SYLVETTE.

Nobody!—and my letter?

[She lays her muslin mantle on a bench, etc.]

Day by day

[she goes to the tree]

Some gallant—some adorer—some unseen
Beautiful lover, brings—

*[she plunges her hand into the tree-trunk, and
holds up letter]*

A flower i' the green!

[She reads aloud.]

'O Sylvia, Sylvia, marble-hearted, quite!

'This is the last'—

[she looks up]

—The last?—'complaining I indite.

'What! still no answer, tiger-hearted maid?

'What! still no pity?' *[Spoken.]* Oh, I am
afraid!

[Reads.]

'Love in my hollow heart reverberates forlorn'—

[Spoken.]

How well he writes!

[She crumples up the paper nervously.]

And Percinet—is gone!

He left me for the world. I'll do as much for him.
I will not wait alone and watch my dreams grow
dim.

—Let him but claim me now, this lord who loves
me so—.

[*She looks at the letter.*]

‘O tiger-hearted maid!’ Alas! how should men
know?
From out these dull green leaves, all full of nests
and birds,
Let him appear, like dawn, and claim me with
sweet words—
With strange, sweet words. And, as I am—un-
curled,
Without a hat—I’d fly, I’d follow round the world!

[*Holding out her hands.*]

Whatever it may cost, break, custom’s iron bands!
My lover, still unknown, see! I stretch suppliant
hands.

Where art thou?

[*Enter STRAFOREL.*]

STRAFOREL

[*in a loud voice*].

Here!

SYLVETTE.

O help! O help me, Percinet!

[*Going backwards as STRAFOREL advances.*]

How dare you, sir, come near!

and tearing off his linen coat and white hat, covered with lime, appears in a brilliant, fantastic costume, fair curling wig, military moustache.]

SYLVETTE

[startled].

My lord——

STRAFOREL

[interrupting].

For love it was, for love of you, I came.
A certain Straforel once spoke your charming
name ;—
Since then I'm mad with love—quite mad—afire,
I swear,
To right your cruel wrongs——

SYLVETTE

[bewildered].

I know not what they were !

STRAFOREL.

Angels forget ; but I—nay, do not tremble, Sweet,
For Straforel is dead—I slew him at my feet.

SYLVETTE

[horrified].

You killed him !

STRAFOREL

[*showing his hand*].

With this hand. It always was my joy
To kill my fellow-man.

[*He curls his moustache. Complacently.*]

I've practised since a boy.

SYLVETTE.

Merciful Heaven ! my-lord !

STRAFOREL

[*patronisingly*].

Leave all to me, fair Flower—
At any cost you crave to live one royal hour.

SYLVETTE

[*protesting*].

My lord !

STRAFOREL.

My word is pledged. To-night I claim my wife.

SYLVETTE.

O sir !

STRAFOREL.

I'm not in jest.

SYLVETTE.

My lord !

STRAFOREL.

My Dearest Life !

But you are deeply pledged. I heard you speak
the words.

At dusk we'll fly away—we two—like frightened
birds, [*with a swaggering air*]

And if your worthy merchant-father lose his head
With grief—such things have been——

SYLVETTE

[*piteously*].

My lord !

STRAFOREL.

Nay, strike me dead !

It were a merry jest. I'll shoot men on our
track

Like dogs ; since, once eloped, there is no turning
back.

Ho for a merry life !

SYLVETTE

[*frightened*].

But, sir——

STRAFOREL.

The life for me !
 Say, Sweetheart, shall we fly when winds and
 storms are free ?
 When on our naked heads the wild rains beat——

SYLVETTE

[alarmed].

O sir !

STRAFOREL.

The paths of joy are red from bleeding feet.

SYLVETTE

[*piteously*].

But, sir !

STRAFOREL.

In unknown lands, far from all human ken,
We'll live in lone content, dressed like two
 beggar-men.

SYLVETTE

[startled].

But why ?

STRAFOREL

[*proudly*].

I have no gold. [*Scornfully.*] You would not have me—*rich*?

SYLVETTE

[*doubtfully*].

I——

STRAFOREL

[*patronisingly*].

‘Love me for myself.’ I know. Don’t blush,
sweet witch!

[*Declaiming.*]

Once there, we’ll live on crusts—crusts soaked
in lovers’ tears.

SYLVETTE

[*horrified*].

My lord——!

STRAFOREL.

We’ll live alone, and all forgot, for years.

SYLVETTE

[*protesting*].

But I——

STRAFOREL.

Not in a house. No, we shall find content
In simpler things than *that*. I’ll love you in a
tent.

SYLVETTE.

A tent!

STRAFOREL.

Ropes, canvas, tent-poles, six or seven—

[*declaiming*]

The only bars between us and high heaven.

SYLVETTE

[*aghast*].

What have I done ?

STRAFOREL

[*tenderly*].

What ! still a-quaking, Sweet ?

You fear the road is long for such small feet ?

So be it. We will hide, my fairest Queen,

Wherever we may hope to live unseen.

O solitude—O rapture——

SYLVETTE

[*timidly*].

You mistake——

STRAFOREL.

Never an honest man this guilty hand will take.

What matter ?

SYLVETTE.

Matter !

STRAFOREL.

Prejudice, my Own.
This world was only built to be o'erthrown.
Our happiness shall spring from our disgrace.

SYLVETTE

[*with dignity*].

My lord !

STRAFOREL.

All day I'll contemplate your face.
My only task, to hymn your praise in song——

SYLVETTE

[*deprecating*].

My lord——

STRAFOREL.

O Poesy, O Passion !—All day long.—
Then, I'll be jealous of your slightest look——

SYLVETTE

[*protesting*].

My lord !

STRAFOREL.

Like black Othello in the story-book,
I'll howl like wolves, like jackals, and like bears——

SYLVETTE

[falls half fainting on the bench].

My lord !

STRAFOREL.

I'll drown you in your own salt tears,
If you but rattle at your chains.

SYLVETTE

[faintly].

My lord !

STRAFOREL

[with a magnificent air].

The chains of love are sacred, my Adored.

SYLVETTE

[taking courage].

My lord——

STRAFOREL

[menacing].

You tremble ?

SYLVETTE

[relapsing].

Heaven ! those awful chains.

STRAFOREL

[*snatching at her hand violently*].

Does milk and water blue these lovely veins ?

[*He kisses her hand and throws it aside.*]

Are you a schoolgirl thus to shrink from me ?—

Shrink from your high, romantic destiny ?

See, now I go ; [*threateningly*] but shall I go—
beguiled ?

SYLVETTE

[*faltering*].

My lord——

STRAFOREL

[*patronisingly*].I understand. Comfort your soul, my
child !To-night, this very night, upon my wildest horse
I'll bear you far away. You'll suffer, dear, of
course,But sedan chairs are slow—are slow and very
dear ;And *this* elopement counts. I'll come for you,
no fear.[*Goes up stage.*]

SYLVETTE

[*faintly*].

My lord——!

STRAFOREL

I shall return.

SYLVETTE

[*imploringly*].

My lord !

STRAFOREL

[*waving his hand*].

I come again.

Let me but seek my cloak, my steed with tossing
mane.

SYLVETTE

[*imploringly*].

My lord !

STRAFOREL

[*waving his arms with a magnificent gesture*].

And we shall fly from distant shore to shore.

[*Comes down stage.*]

O dearest dream of love ! O heart that beats
once more !

Sweet soul ! to whom my soul can whisper—'Lo !
my bride !'

I shall return, to stay——

SYLVETTE

[*in a half-choked voice*].

To stay ?

STRAFOREL.

Yes ; by thy side
To live for evermore — to live while worlds
endure.

[*Fatuously.*]

You loved me ere we met. We met. My love
was sure.—

[*Before going out he turns and sees her half
fainting on the bench. Aside.*]

Flourish of trumpets ; enter Percinet !

[*Exit.*]

SYLVETTE

[*opening her eyes ; faintly.*]

My lord ! O sir ! Oh, not—not in that awful
way !

Oh pity me, my lord !—*Not* on the champing
steed.

Let me go home instead. I could not bear—
Indeed.

A schoolgirl.—That is all. My lord !—I would
not seem

Anything more. My lord !

[*She looks about her.*]

Gone ? What an *awful* dream !

[*A pause. She sits up and collects herself.*]

I'd rather serious things would happen but in
jest.

[*She gets up.*]

O Sylvia, O my dear, this thing you held for
best,
This love you longed to know—this lover heaven-
sent—

Oh!—

[*She throws up her arms.*]

Beggars' clothes and scorn ;—exile—and oh, that
tent!

Alas! he brought too much. Ah me, I wanted
less:

A laurel leaf or two dropped in the daily mess ;
—Not bitterness of bays—but spice to daily
meat.

[*She sighs pensively.*]

I could be happy now with something—not so
sweet.—

[*The twilight deepens in the park. She takes up
her muslin veil left on the bench and covers
her head and shoulders with it. She murmurs
dreamily.*]

Who knows?

[*Enter PERCINET. He is in rags, his arm in a
sling; he drags himself with difficulty. His
hat, in which the feather is broken, nearly
conceals his face. SYLVETTE has not yet
seen him.*]

PERCINET.

Since yester morn I have not broken bread,
 Nor eat, nor drank, nor slept ; and oh, this throbbing head !
 —O sorry, sorry sport !—Farewell, adventures all !
 Mine ears are leaden grown when syren voices call.

[*He leans upon the wall, his hat falls and uncovers his face. SYLVETTE catches sight of him.*]

SYLVETTE.

You ?

[*He springs up aghast. She looks at him.*]

And in what a plight ! Oh ! can it——

PERCINET

[*grimly*].

—The Prodigal's Return.—[*Piteously.*] It can be.
 Alas, alas
 for me !

[*He staggers.*]

SYLVETTE

[*clasping her hands*].

Alack ! he's fain to fall !

PERCINET

[*reassuringly*].

Nothing ; a passing thrill——

SYLVETTE

[*catching sight of his arm, and with a cry*].

Wounded !

PERCINET

[*quickly*].

And can your heart forgive, O Sylvia, still ?

SYLVETTE

[*severely, moving away*].

Only a father, sir, the fatted calf should slay.

[*PERCINET makes a quick movement, and his wounded arm makes him wince.*]

SYLVETTE

[*speaking involuntarily, alarmed*].

Alas, that wound !

PERCINET

[*sadly*].

Alas ! for poorest Percinet !

Yet spare your sweetest tears ; I would not have
you grieve.

PERCINET.

Alas! must you be told?
—How among thieves I fell, and grovelled among
swine?

SYLVETTE

[*ironically*].

That's Life. *I've* learned that too.

[*With ill-repressed curiosity.*]

Were the strange ladies fine?

PERCINET

[*hastily*].

Don't talk of them, my dear.

SYLVETTE.

And on high balconies,
With silken ladders hung, did you ascend the
skies?

PERCINET

[*aside*].

I nearly broke my neck!

SYLVETTE

[*ironically*].

Oh brave, whom love inspires!

PERCINET

[*aside*].

Alas, poor silly sheep, with coat torn by the
briars !

SYLVETTE.

Long in your memory will such great hours stay !

PERCINET

[*aside*].

How in a cupboard hid I spent one summer day.

SYLVETTE.

The gallant wagers won——

PERCINET.

Oh, yes, oh yes ; [*aside*] and how
An angry spouse belabours
[*He rubs his shoulder.*]

SYLVETTE

[*admiringly, pointing to his arm*].

Wounded now ?

PERCINET

[*aside*].

It nearly cost my life.

SYLVETTE

[*doubtfully*].

And yet you have come back ?

PERCINET.

Athirst ; afoot ; stripped bare ; a sorry sight,
alack !

SYLVETTE

[*enthusiastically*].

Yes ; but at least you 've seen, you 've found True
Poetry !

PERCINET.

I sought it far and wide.

[*He speaks tenderly.*]

I left it, dear, with thee.

Ah, do not mock me, Sweet, dear Sweet whom I
adore !

SYLVETTE.

Alas, 'tis *you* forget ! Alas, those days are o'er !

PERCINET.

But why ?

SYLVETTE

[*sadly*].You have forgot. *They* held us up to scorn.

PERCINET.

They? Who? [Aside.] My heart awakes; it
wakes to shining dawn!

SYLVETTE.

Our fathers played at hate.

PERCINET

[quickly].

We played at love's delight.

SYLVETTE

[shaking her head].

Oh, that's all very well. *I've* not forgotten,
quite!

[With reproach.]

You called this wall a stage where silly puppets
played.

PERCINET

[embarrassed].

I said—I did not say——

[with an outburst]

—What matter what I said?

Dear wall, dear stage, dear mossy stage leaf-set !
 With great green boughs for screens, and heaven
 for parapet.

[He points with his hand.]

Our backcloth this old park, that fades to
 tenderest blue ;
 The flaming sun for lamp ; and Juliet played by
 you ;
 Where winds breathe discourse sweet, where
 flowers and sun and birds
 Act the old play for which our Shakespeare made
 the words.
 Yes . . . though our fathers bade us speak the
 parts,
 Pulled puppet-strings, and thought to tutor
 hearts—
 It was a stage, my Sylvia, where the play
 Had been rehearsed by Love—by Love !

SYLVETTE.

Alack the day !
 But we were guilty, or we thought it guilt.

PERCINET

[reassuringly].

Guilty we were. A crime is always built
 On bad intentions ; and we *meant* a crime,
 And so are sinners——

SYLVETTE

[*doubtfully*].

But that other time——

PERCINET

[*quickly*].

Sinners!—I would not rob you of one pang.
For less than this men have been doomed to hang.

SYLVETTE.

You swear it? [*She looks doubtful.*]

PERCINET

[*fervently*].

By your sweet, your balmy breath!
We have been guilty, love, guilty to death.

SYLVETTE

[*shaken in her conviction, sitting down quite near him*].

Really guilty? [*Gets up and moves away.*] Yet,
O Percinet,

Our danger was not danger—it was play.

PERCINET.

It was true danger if we held it true.

SYLVETTE

[*sadly*].

That rape was but a seeming ; even you—
Your rescue was the merest fairy-tale.

PERCINET.

Were you less frightened ? Did you turn less
pale ?

And since your soul has tasted the rude woe
Of an abduction, I would have you know
It is the same, my love, as if you'd fled.

SYLVETTE

[*shaking her head*].

No ; the dear dream is spoilt, the charm is sped.
Those masks, those cloaks, that music i' the night,
That thrilling combat—for I saw you fight !

[*Clasping her hands.*]

I saw you as a god, whose victims fell.

[*Pouting.*]

Yet all was feigned, by Master Straforel !

PERCINET.

And could he feign that night of Paradise,
That lovely gift of April to our love ?—
Or set with stars the starry shining skies ?
Or teach the mist to shimmer like a dove ?

Was it his power that bade the roses dim
Float in mid-air, like flowers on a stream,
Till, like a redder rose, above the rim
Of dreaming woods, the moon rose in our dream ?

SYLVETTE.

O Percinet !

PERCINET.

O love! young as that night of spring,
A-fire with youth; a-bloom; untouched; in-
violate;—
What need of magic here? O fond Heart,
wavering,
F'ly to your nest at last. My dove has found her
mate!

SYLVETTE

[with emotion].

Your dove? [*She turns away and sheds tears.*]

PERCINET.

A tear? [*He takes her by the hand.*]
A pearl? [*Kissing her hand.*]
You can forgive me—so?

SYLVETTE

[*simply*].

I loved you all the while. I think I did not know.

PERCINET.

This is your brow ; this is your lovely hair ;
 The virgin breath of you makes sweet this
night ;
 The angels in God's heaven are not more fair.

[He plays with her floating veil.]

Oh, let me kiss this hem of maiden white !
 Come ! blessèd cloud, my dear love's dearest veil !
 Come, cool my parchèd lips with thy perfumes !

[Half aside.]

How could I slight these maiden muslins pale
 For all the silks and velvets of their looms ?

SYLVETTE

[quickly, with curiosity].

What silk ? Whose velvet ?

PERCINET.

No one, O my Sweet !

My child ; my Sylvia ; at your sacred feet
[he kneels]
 I kneel to worship Whiteness.

SYLVETTE

[looking down].

My poor dress

Is only linen, dearest.

PERCINET.

See, I press
My lips upon its border, bending low
Lest I should soil my sweet saint's robe of
snow.

This linen fold
That clips you tight,
As envious clouds enfold
The light ;

This thin white lawn—
White flutterings,
Outspread, indrawn—
Your wings ;

This linen fold
So seemly laid—
A look, overbold,
Might fade ;

This filmy lawn—
As virginally fair
As the cobweb, born
'Mid air ;

This linen fold—
As dainty-bright
As are your thoughts, untold,
All white ;

This speckless lawn—
Dazzling like snow, like fire—
The soul of You ; withdrawn
From my desire ;

SYLVETTE.

O foolish, foolish, foolish girl and boy
To seek for joy and love, when we are Love and
Joy !

[Enter STRAFOREL. *He recalls the fathers and shows them SYLVETTE and PERCINET in one another's arms.*]

STRAFOREL.

Look! Reconciled!

BERGAMIN.

My son! [*He embraces PERCINET.*]

STRAFOREL.

You'll pay me now?

PASQUIN

[*to his daughter*].

You love the boy again?

SYLVETTE.

Yes.

PASQUIN.

Lord! a woman's vow!

STRAFOREL.

I'll get my well-earned gold ?

BERGAMIN.

You'll get both gold and glory.

SYLVETTE

[*startled*].

That voice ? O Heavens !—The Marquis of my
story !

STRAFOREL

[*bowing*].

Your Marquis ? It was I, most charming Miss,
I—Straforel !—Forgive me, that in this
My zeal forestalled your wishes, and I took
Means just to give you, in a single look,
That knowledge women often travel far
To find out for themselves—how dull adventures
are !
Doubtless you too, like him, [*indicating* PERCINET]
our dear young friend,
Might find this out in time ; but, faith ! that
bitter end
Is far to seek. The world is hard and wide.

[*Confidentially.*]

I showed you my best magic-lantern slide !

PERCINET.

What's that?

SYLVETTE

[hastily].

Nothing. I love you!

BERGAMIN

[pointing to the wall begun].

And to-morrow—bang!

Down with those stones, and let all walls go
hang!

PASQUIN.

Away with all that ever stands between!

STRAFOREL.

No; keep your walls. Without them naught had
been.

SYLVETTE

*[summoning the actors about her].*And now we five—if Master Straforel please—
Let us expound the play in which we've tried to
please.*[She comes down stage and addresses the audience,
marking time with her hand.]*Light, easy rhymes; old dresses, frail and light;
Love in a park, fluting an ancient tune.*[Soft music.]*

K

BERGAMIN.

A fairy-tale quintet, mad as Midsummer-night.

PASQUIN.

Some quarrels. Yes !—but all so very slight !

STRAFOREL.

Madness of sunstroke ; madness of the moon !
A worthy villain, in his mantle dight.

SYLVETTE.

Light, easy rhymes ; old dresses, frail and light ;
Love in a park, fluting an ancient tune.

PERCINET.

A Watteau picture—not by Watteau, quite ;
Release from many a dreary Northern rune ;
Lovers and fathers ; old walls, flowery-bright ;
A brave old plot—with music—ending soon.

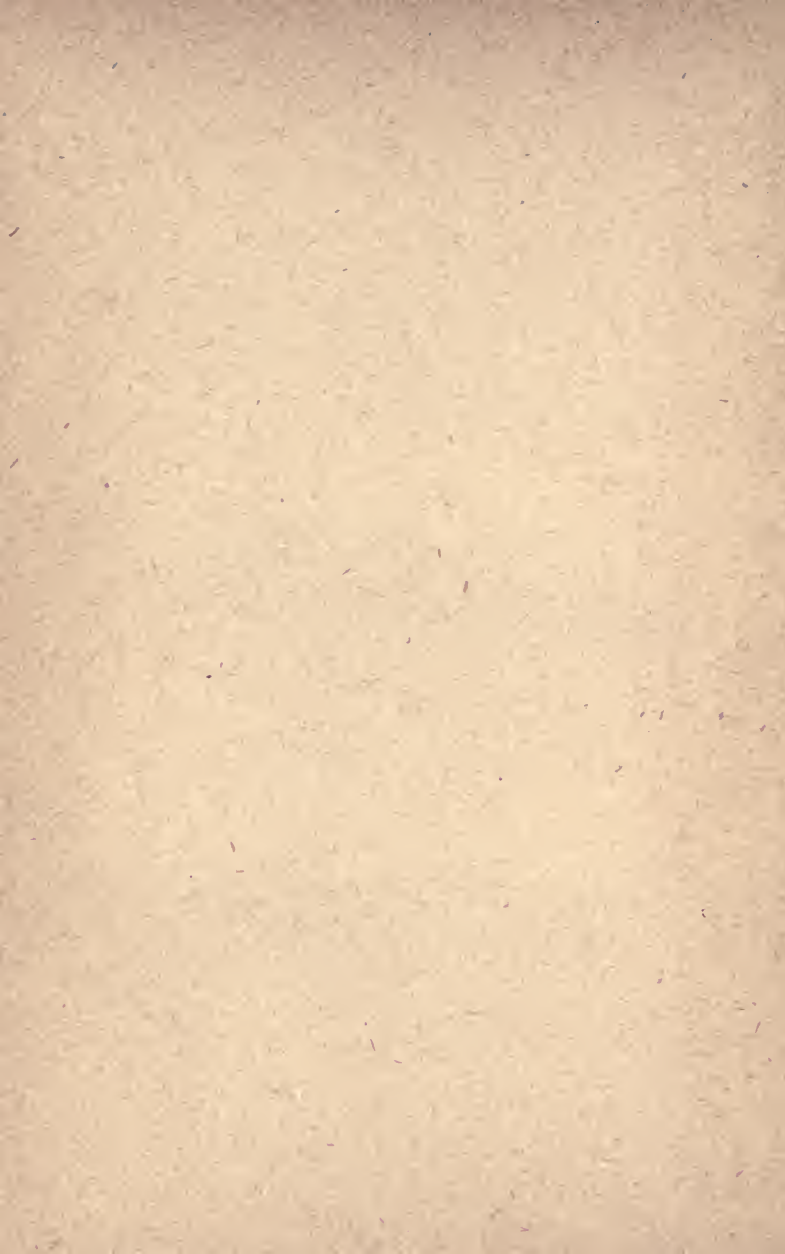
SYLVETTE.

Light, easy rhymes ; old dresses, frail and light.

*[The stage gradually darkens ; the last lines are
delivered in voices that grow fainter as the
actors appear to fade away into mist and
darkness.]*

CURTAIN.

THE END.



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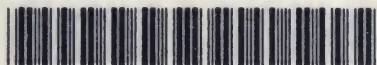
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